

Public Works and Sustainability Committee

April 4, 2012

From: Dorothy Clegg

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In support of Bill #10.....

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To The Public Works and Sustainability Committee:

I believe that The Honolulu City Council has the responsibility to its citizens and the state of Hawai'i to pass **Bill #10**. By passing this Bill we will join the rest of the counties in our state banning Single-use plastic bags. This will make Hawai'i the first **plastic bag free state** in the U.S. It will prove our commitment to sustainability and to the Clean Energy Initiative 2030. It will also demonstrate to the nation that Hawai'i continues to be a forerunner in becoming a sustainable state.

Maui, Kauai and most recently Hawai'i Counties have passed a similar bills/ordinances to BAN single-use plastic bags. Now is the time for Honolulu County to join the rest of Hawai'i to become **plastic bag free**.

Most people are not aware that a plastic bag is only utilized for an average of 15 minutes, but takes an estimate 1000 years to biodegrade. Most Americans will accrue between 300-400 plastic bags a year, and only 8% of those are recycled. Think of how many bags in Honolulu County we use daily, not just the residents but include the 342,476 monthly visitors.

Our definition of recycling plastic bags in Hawai'i is to ship them to either California or Asia. We ship these bags to our islands to be used for 15 minutes, only to ship 8% of them back to be recycled. However, this is merely 8% of all the bags that we consume. Where does the other 92% go? Into our over crowded landfills? Into our ocean? Do they actually make it to H-Power? In 2007 the EPA acknowledged that

despite recent tightening of emission standards for waste incineration power plants, the waste-to-energy process still “create significant emissions, including trace amounts of hazardous air pollutants.”

Once a plastic bag enters our landfill it photo-degrades into smaller particles, then finds its way into our water. Our fish ingests these smaller particles that are known as “plastic dust”. Plastic dust is ingested by filter feeding marine animals. The dust and the bio-toxins, such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) that the plastic dust accumulates, are passed up the food chain to fish and humans. We are eating toxins when we consume fish from our ocean. How do these toxins affect our keiki, their bodies are not as strong or developed as adults to handle these poisons.

What happens if the plastic bags do not make it to our landfill but goes straight into our ocean? The study by C.J. Moore, “A Comparison of Plastic and Plankton in the Pacific Central Gyre.” Concludes that the most identifiable plastics found in the Pacific Gyre were thin films, otherwise known as plastic bags.” What are we doing to our ocean and its inhabitants?

By eliminating the choice of plastic, we are reducing our consumption of oil, the principle material used in plastic manufacturing. Therefore we are aligning ourselves with the state’s Clean Energy Initiative to reduce our oil consumption 70% by 2030.

It has been said that paper bag usage has increased since the BANS have been implemented on our neighboring islands. However what is not stated is the over all decrease in single-use bag usage. Therefore paper bag numbers may have increased but what has the total amount of single-use bag usage done?

Although paper bags are not truly sustainable, they are a better choice than plastic. Paper bags are made from post-consumer material, which is easier to biodegrade, and are renewable. Research has shown that consumers were more likely to retain a paper bag than plastic; therefore the paper bag would be reused.

Since our economy relies on tourism, we will be able to capitalize on and market the fact Hawai'i is the first state in the U.S. to be **plastic bag free**. Our tourists come from areas that have similar progressive legislation in effect: China, Philippines, Samoa, selective states in Australia, South Korea, most of the E.U. and selective cities on the continental US. Many people around this planet carry their own bags now; it has become a habit and a trend.

It is time for us, the people of Hawai'i to become responsible stewards of these islands we call home and the ocean that surrounds us. Let us pass on to our keiki a better Hawai'i, a sustainable Hawai'i.

By voting for **Bill #10** , you as our leaders will be taking the first step in establishing a legacy of transformation to create a more sustainable Hawai'i. With this act you will implement methods that do not harm the environment but improve it.

I urge you to vote YES on Bill #10, making Hawai'i the first state in the Nation to be **plastic bag free**. This council has the power to make this historic change, and join the rest of Hawai'i in banning single-use plastic bags in our state.

Hawai'i the 50th state but the 1st state in the Nation to be **plastic bag free!!**

Thank you,

Dorothy M. Clegg
Captain United Airlines